UN/ECE
ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION
Workshop Update

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe **No. 1 September 1993**

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With this issue the UN/ECE is launching its WORKSHOP UPDATE which is scheduled to appear periodically. Its aim is to provide information about the United Nations Economic Commission's programme of workshops designed to assist its member countries in transition from centrally planned to market economies and facilitate their integration into the European and world economy. It will also indicate opportunities for financial support of the workshops or the participation of experts from transition countries through the UN/ECE Trust Fund for Assistance to Countries in Transition (TFACT). It will also contain a calendar of workshops for the coming months.

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INTRODUCING THE UN/ECE PROGRAMME OF WORKSHOPS

In April 1990, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) took account of the fact that recent and current developments in Europe had modified in varying ways the characteristics and functioning of the societies and economies of the region and received a special mandate from its member Governments to develop specific assistance to economies in transition. To this end, among other activities, the Commission launched a programme of workshops in order to focus on specific demands of countries in transition, facilitate their contacts with the business community and generate technical know-how and expert advice.

UN/ECE workshops are short, informal meetings, which bring together government and international experts, businessmen, industrialists, and academic authorities to examine problems in a particular area and propose solutions. The topical and practical subjects addressing the major problems of transition include:

Privatization
Restructuring of state enterprises
Industrial policy
Trade and investments
Promotion of direct foreign investment
Promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises
Pricing policies
Quality control
Application of statistical practices for market economies in transition countries
Managing new technologies
Environmental management
Sustainable industrial management
Efficient use of energy
Adaptation of transport enterprises
Development of housing markets
Food processing
Forest legislation under market economy conditions
and others.

The primary objective of the programme has been to provide an informal forum for discussion of those aspects of the transition process which are of immediate concern to the economies in transition. To the extent possible the workshops are held in countries in transition, which enables a wider audience in those countries to benefit from the meetings and makes it easier to target end-users.

While the major responsibility for organizing workshops rests with the host countries, the UN/ECE secretariat plays a supporting role. It acts as a match-maker in bringing together the host Government and potential sponsors and experts, assists in the elaboration of the workshop programme, provides substantive backstopping for the meetings, assists in the formulation of recommendations and reports, as well as the multitude of tasks necessary to ensure that the workshop is productive.

READEX
FICHE

The recent admission to the UN/ECE of a significant number of additional countries in transition has enhanced the demand for UN/ECE workshops considerably. UN/ECE's membership has grown from 34 to 53 in a relatively short span of time. As a consequence, countries in transition now account for almost half of UN/ECE membership.

Efforts have been made to ensure close cooperation wherever possible with other international organizations and institutions in the region; the Commission of the European Communities, OECD, the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), EUROSTAT, UNDP, WHO, IMF, GATT, ITC, UNIDO and UNCHS have already participated in the programme, some on several occasions. This approach helps to avoid duplication of work already organized by other fora.

The experience with 85 workshops held so far proves their practical benefit to different sectors of the economies in transition. A measure of the success of the workshop programme is the continously growing demand placed on the UN/ECE secretariat for assistance in organizing such events. 53 workshops are currently under preparation for 1993 and 1994.

FUNDING

UN/ECE Trust Fund for Assistance to Countries in Transition

The workshops, whose organization is highly cost-effective, are not financed by the UN/ECE budget but by extrabudgetary sources. Nonetheless, the major burden has fallen on the countries in transition themselves. They have sometimes been supported by grants from local authorities and/or industries. Bilateral contributions in cash or kind from government and private sponsors in market-economy countries have also been made. However, the absence of reliable funding sources for the programme has meant that it is very difficult to plan workshops in a more systematic way.

The countries in transition, particularly the newly independent states, are encountering great difficulties in financing the participation of their representatives in meetings of international organizations, such as the UN/ECE. In the belief that the integration of the transition countries of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union depends to a considerable extent upon their capacity to participate in these meetings, the secretariat has established a **UN/ECE Trust Fund for Assistance to Countries in Transition (TFACT)**.

The Trust Fund will serve as a channel through which governments, international organizations, institutions and other donors may contribute funds to help the transition countries and newly independent states to defray the costs of their participation in UN/ECE meetings, including its programme of workshops. The Fund may also cover other forms of technical assistance. It is intended to complement and not duplicate other bilateral or multilateral assistance.

Donors may indicate the specific area of work, activities, meetings or purposes for which they wish their contribution to be earmarked within the broad framework of the Fund, or the country or countries for which the contribution is intended. As a rule the funds become operational two weeks from the date on which the payment is received in Geneva. The funds in trust may be used to pay local costs at the venue of the meeting (per diem) or the transportation costs (air fare, etc.) to and from the meeting, or both if available funds permit.

The UN/ECE secretariat matches to the extent possible the requests received from countries in transition for assistance with the funds contributed. It arranges for the issuance of travel authorizations, tickets and local cost vouchers as appropriate. It does so either directly with the requesting authority in the country concerned or through the respective Permanent Mission in Geneva. As a rule, requests must be received by the secretariat at least two weeks prior to the event for which assistance is needed. The secretariat also provides quarterly statements of account to donors and ad hoc statements upon request.

The opening of the UN/ECE Trust Fund is intended to relieve donors of the considerable work involved in matching requests with available donations, issuing travel documents, making payments, processing travel claims and maintaining accounts.

The Trust Fund is administered and audited in accordance with United Nations financial regulations and rules.

Contributions to the Fund may be made either:

a. by bank transfer to:

Société de Banque Suisse
Case Postale 2770
CH-1211 Genève 2

Account no. CA;590.160.0 for contributions in Swiss francs
Account no. CA;590.160.1 for contributions in US dollars

with a reference to the "UN/ECE Trust Fund for Assistance to Countries in Transition"; or

b. by cheque made payable to "UN/Economic Commission for Europe" and sent to the address below indicating the purpose of payment.

In either case, a communication should be sent by the donors, informing the UN/ECE of the amount contributed, the date of payment and the purposes for which the funds are to be earmarked.

TFACT
Office of the Executive Secretary
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
Palais des Nations
CH-1211 Geneva 10

Tel. No.: (022) 917.2394 or 917.2667
Fax No.: (022) 917.0036

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Joint UN/ECE/UNEP Project on **Strengthening Environmental Management Capabilities** in Central and East European Countries - four workshops planned.

This joint UN/ECE/UNEP Project is designed to strengthen the institutional capabilities and skills in environmental management and planning in the countries in transition in central and eastern Europe. The project constitutes an updating and follow-up of past activities of the UN/ECE Joint Working Group on Environment and Economics, and the analytical work and training carried out by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in cooperation with the Centre for International Projects in the Russian Federation. The project will also draw on the relevant work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and, in particular, the guidelines which it has developed on the use of environmental impact assessment procedures and economic instruments in environmental planning and management as well as the policies and practices for environmental planning and management in UN/ECE member countries.

A key element of the project is the organization of a series of four workshops on the legal and regulatory framework for environmental management (held in Bulgaria); on institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms for environmental planning and management (Slovenia); on environmental policy planning and management techniques (Ukraine); and on economic instruments for environmental management (Estonia). Based on the outcome of the workshops, a draft code of practice will be prepared on the integration of environmental policy into the economic reform process in the economies in transition. This draft code will be submitted to the Senior Advisers to UN/ECE Governments on Environmental and Water Problems in 1994.

Forthcoming Workshops

The following is a tentative schedule of forthcoming workshops, subject to confirmation..

ENVIRONMENT

Institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms for environmental planning and management	Ljubljana 29 Sept.-1 Oct. 1993	Slovenia
Environmenatal policy planning and management techniques	Kiev 17-19 Nov. 1993	Ukraine
Application of economic instruments for environmental management	Tallinn 1-3 Dec. 1993	Estonia

TRANSPORT, COMMUNICATIONS AND TOURISM

Problems concerning the possible organization of a unified inland navigation market in Europe	Vienna end 1993	Austria

INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND FINANCE

Promoting foreign direct investment in a small country in transition	Ljubljana November 1993	Slovenia

STATISTICS

Results of technical assistance in statistics to countries in transition	Bucharest 12-14 Oct. 1993	Romania

ENERGY

Increase of energy efficiency for resource protection - potentials for rationalization in western and eastern Europe	Leipzig 11-12 Oct. 1993	Germany
Development of environmental regulations in opencast mining under market conditions	Most 9-11 Nov. 1993	Czech Rep.

Energy efficiency and indoor environment in buildings	Oslo 12-14 Nov. 1993	Norway
Energy Efficiency 2000, NEMEX National Energy Management Exhibition and Conference	Birmingham 7-8 Dec. 1993	United Kingdom
HUMAN SETTLEMENTS		
Cadastre and land registration system	Zagreb 4-6 Oct. 1993	Croatia
Sustainable development: research experience	The Hague 1-3 Nov. 1993	Netherlands
Sustainable tourism development	Eger 9-11 Nov. 1993	Hungary
Financial and economic aspects of housing reform in transition countries	Sofia 15-17 Nov. 1993	Bulgaria
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT		
Standardization policies	Nicosia 26-27 Oct. 1993	Cyprus
FORESTRY AND TIMBER		
Forming of new forestry law in countries of central and eastern Europe in transition	Warsaw, Debe 27-Sept.-1 Oct. 1993	Poland
Sustainable development of forest enterprises	Schwarzsee 22-26 Nov. 1993	Switzerland

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